

2<sup>nd</sup> April 2005

In St Peter's Square, after the official announcement had been made, everyone bowed their head. But this was immediately followed by applause, applause in the name of all those who would have wanted to be there at that moment, not in order to mourn his death, but to say:

Thank you for having lived.

Thank you for having taught us the gift of perseverance.

Thank you for having opened our eyes to the gift of faith.

Thank you for having touched our hearts with the gift of the will.

Thank you for restoring to us our strength in our moments of weakness.

Thank you for speaking out for peace, declaring that war, regardless of who wins, is always a defeat for humanity.

Thank you for teaching us respect for the planet when you said: "I kiss the earth as I kiss the hands of my mother."

Thank you for having gone forth to meet your flock, who so needed to see you and to hear you say: "I came for you. Now you have come to me."

"Do not be afraid to set off into the unknown. Walk with courage, faith and trust, knowing that I am with you."

These are your words, you set the example, and we will carry on. We will weep our tears, but hoping that you do not see them, hoping that you hear only our applause, John Paul, the pilgrim pope.

**Paulo Coelho**

Translated from the Portuguese by Margaret Jull Costa